

Intangible Cultural Heritage Update

News and Notes on Newfoundland and Labrador's Intangible Cultural Heritage Program



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The Inter-City Intangible Cultural Cooperation Network (ICCN)

An international organization of municipalities and NGOs working in the field of intangible cultural heritage has opened the door to admitting the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador (HFNL) as an associate member.

The Inter-City Intangible Cultural Cooperation Network (ICCN) is an international organization of local governments and cultural organizations that aims to safeguard the world's intangible cultural heritage, with its main office in the city of Gangneung, Republic of Korea. ICCN works to explore creative and effective policies for the safeguarding of local intangible cultural heritage and its relationship to sustainable local development. HFNL was granted temporary membership in the organization at ICCN's General Assembly in the city of Isfahan, Iran, held October 8 to 12, 2014.

"I believe that your presence will make our network stronger and able to diversify discussions with sharing your experiences in the safeguarding local intangible culture," writes Myeong-hee Choi, ICCN Representative, and Mayor of Gangneung. "The passion of your inhabitants and community toward local art and culture will give a great inspiration to the ICCN and our members."

Gangneung is located on the east coast of South Korea. It has a population of 229,869, and boasts a strong history of supporting intangible cultural heritage initiatives, including the UNESCO- inscribed Gangneung Danoje Festival, which includes a variety of folk play performances, folk songs, oral narrative poetry, and various popular pastimes and traditional games.

In addition to HFNL, other organizations recognized by ICCN in 2014 include: the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, Romania; the International Center for Folklore and Culture, India; the Hungarian open air museum; and the Rimmon School of Music, Israel.

Currently, HFNL has been accepted as a temporary member. Permanent membership as an associate member requires the submission of an annual activity report documenting HFNL's work safeguarding and promoting local ICH, before the ICCN board meeting in the autumn of 2015.

Photo: cod splitting demonstration, Petty Harbour, September 2014

An Introduction to Placemaking: Thoughts from NL's Intangible Cultural Heritage Office

By Dale Jarvis

Placemaking is all about creating, or re-making, safe, meaningful places for residents to meet and interact. It draws on local assets, inspiration, people, and potential. Placemaking is transformative. It inspires local people to create and improve their own public places, and helps them feel like they have a strong stake in their community's future.

The Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador deals with both heritage buildings and with intangible heritage (our culture and traditions). When we work on heritage districts in communities, those two different sides of heritage come together. In our district work, we conduct field research, assess local needs, and develop public programs around those needs. In one district, Heart's Content, folklorist Lisa Wilson worked with residents to make a booklet of local stories and an online story map, as well as a set of grassroots recommendations about what the community wished to see happen in the district. In another district, Cable Avenue in Bay Roberts, she curated a small exhibit at the local museum on the street, which incorporated artefacts loaned from residents and audio clips from locals. We hosted a 100th birthday party for the Avenue, on the Avenue itself, complete with a birthday cake for the street, cut by one of the oldest residents.

Streets are public spaces. We think of streets as being just an infrastructure to support cars, but streets can be transformed into meeting places, places for walking and celebrating, and places where people can meet face-to-face. The Mummers Parade in St. John's is a great example of this - a participatory parade where disguised and costumed revelers bring new life to an old Newfoundland tradition as they march through the streets of downtown.

I like projects like these, which bring place and culture together.

A few years ago, the intangible cultural heritage office ran a project with three towns to bring people together in local parish or community halls, by hosting old-fashioned volunteer variety concerts, with music, skits, dance, and food. We worked with them to package five community concerts as a mini-festival. They all sold out, and along the way, put money back into future community projects, increased attention to local cultural performers, and revitalized a tradition some thought was on the way out.

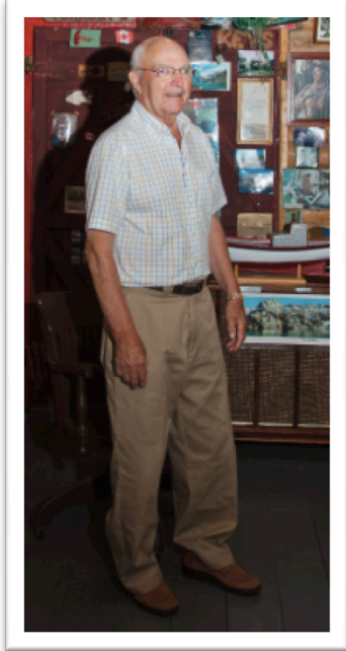
For projects like this to work, good communication is key, as is finding local champions. I like working in communities where there are enthusiastic locals who know the lay of the land, and who know what might work in the context of their community, and what might not. It involves a lot of listening. Focus is also really important - small, simple ideas always seem to work best. Start with something small, and fun, and people are a lot more likely to get involved.

At a make-and-break boat engine festival in Bonavista, we transformed a parking lot in a parts swap, where enthusiasts could meet, trade, and sell vintage engine parts and get to know other people with similar skills and knowledge. In the area of St. John's where I live, the Georgestown Neighbourhood Association organizes an annual community flea market and yard sale, where anyone can put a table out front of their house and sell their wares. It always turns into a party, with a BBQ and music, and most importantly, with neighbours out chatting and meeting each other. These are low-cost ideas, but change both how people perceive their spaces, and how they see the people who might live next door.

If you want to know more about placemaking, and how it might work for public spaces in your community, there are lots of great resources online. The Project for Public Places has a great website at www.pps.org with articles and resources for communities who are just starting out.



The Outer Battery's Charles Pearcey designated as a Provincial Tradition Bearer



Born in 1937, Mr. Charles Pearcey is a fisherman, tradition bearer and amateur archivist. He keeps the tradition and practices of the inshore fishery alive in his experience and in his family's twine store in the Outer Battery. He is representative of the thousands of people who pursued the inshore fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador. Through his documentation and demonstrations he educates visitors about a way of life that is fast disappearing.

Since 1992 Mr. Pearcey has educated untold numbers of visitors about the inshore fishery. Pearcey's Twine Store, located in the former fishing village of the Outer Battery, holds a truly amazing collection of the history of inshore fishing in Newfoundland. Mr. Pearcey has amassed and labeled nets of various kinds, gaffs and pughs, handline gear, trawls, block and tackle, squid jiggers, grapnels, collars – everything needed for an independent fisher to pursue the cod. Along with the gear there is also hand-carved folk art and historical photos of the fishing premises and fishermen on the Outer Battery.

The inshore fishery was the pattern of work in Newfoundland and Labrador for centuries. Independent fishermen in small boats using handlines and fixed gear sustained generations of families in this province. After twenty years of moratorium, the knowledge and skills pertaining to the inshore fishery are fast disappearing, along with the material culture associated with it.

The Pearcey family has had their store in the Outer Battery since 1891. Mr. Pearcey learned the craft of fishing from his grandfather and his father, with whom he fished every summer. Since fishery was an uncertain way to make a living, and he had a young family, he also took a job with the Golden Eagle Company.

The fishery is not pursued in the way it once was. Fishing inshore required intimate knowledge of the landscape and seascape, knowledge of marks for handling places and trap berths, boat handling skills, making fish, traditional building techniques for stores, stages, wharves and flakes, and uncountable other skills which at one time were in use on a daily basis.

Mr. Pearcey is a repository of all this knowledge, which is fast disappearing from the everyday knowledge of Newfoundlanders.

He was designated in 2014 as a Provincial Tradition Bearer under the Provincial Historic Commemorations program. The PHCP is a citizen-driven program of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that allows for the commemoration of aspects of our history and culture that are of provincial significance. This program is distinct for its recognition of the intangible aspects of Newfoundland and Labrador's culture and heritage – the customs, cultural practices, traditional skills and knowledge that define the province and its people.

Mr. Pearcey was nominated by Christina Smith, of the Outer Battery Neighbourhood Association.



HFNL Announces Three Fisheries ICH Projects

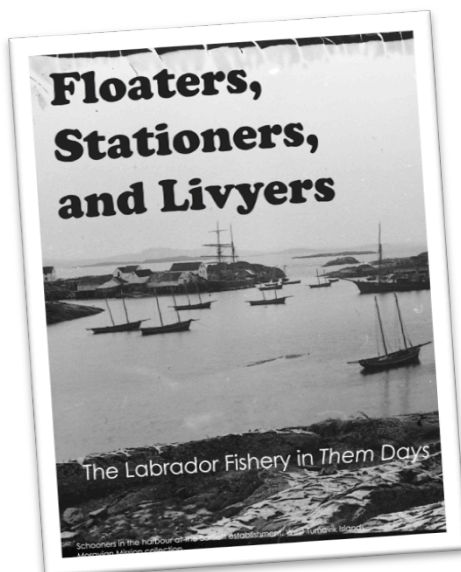
By Dale Jarvis

Documenting the intangible cultural heritage of the cod fishery has been identified as a key area for research in the province's intangible cultural heritage strategy. To this end, in 2014, HFNL brought together its long-running heritage fisheries architecture program and its work on intangible cultural heritage, announcing a grant program for projects to document, record, present, or safeguard the intangible cultural heritage of the fishery in the province. A call for proposals was developed, and municipal councils, museums, archives, and NGOs were invited to submit proposals for documentation projects that would focus on the intangible cultural heritage associated with boats, their builders and those who went to sea, net making and mending, crab or lobster pot repair, knot-tying and ropework, knowledge associated with marine navigation, the architecture of fishing stages and associated material culture, the business of making fish, or oral histories related to the fishery. Out of the submissions, three projects were selected to test the program.

The first project is from the community of Pouch Cove, submitted by the Pouch Cove Heritage Committee. It will focus on the documentation and preservation of the community's cod-liver oil heritage. For over a century, the sale of cod livers provided supplementary income to local fishing families, but the last of the local cod-liver oil factories closed in the 1960s. Today, there are only a handful of people left with knowledge of how cod livers were harvested and converted to oil. The community's ICH project is designed to collect and preserve information surrounding the production of cod-liver oil, as well as community memories about the use of cod-liver oil and its byproduct, liver offal.

The documentation work will result in a number of products: a video documentary; audio recordings and printed transcriptions; outdoor community storyboards combining text and photography; a printed pamphlet which will be distributed to local residents, and a GPS triggered app for mobile phones, which will allow visitors to hear the voices of local residents relating stories and memories about the places where the cod liver oil factories once stood.

The second project is from the community of Cupids, submitted by the non-profit group Cupids Legacy, Inc. Their project will focus on the documentation of traditional fishing grounds, and on changes wrought by technology to traditional navigation techniques. Currently, fishers use a variety of modern technological devices, such as fish finders, depth sounders, and GPS devices. The use of this technology has resulted in a significant decrease in local fish-finding lore related to the finding and utilization of underwater shoals. Historically, fishermen on the water would line up a series of local landmarks (a church steeple or a cairn of rocks, as examples) to triangulate and position their boat over a certain good fishing spot. Many of these marine locations had names, such as "Offa Rock" or "The Patch." The project will generate photographs and textual information about these traditional locations, landmarks, and names, and generate a map or maps of the local fishing grounds.



The third project is a collaboration with Them Days Incorporated, a registered charity dedicated to collecting, protecting and promoting the stories of Labrador. Them Days Inc. publishes a quarterly oral history magazine and maintains an archive containing Labrador-related materials. For their project, the organization will carry out oral history interviews with people closely associated with the Labrador fishery. Material from these interviews, combined with archival research, will be used to compile a special "Them Days" magazine issue that will highlight the history of the fishery in Labrador. Particular attention will be paid to what differentiated the Labrador fishery from other fisheries around the province, and the interaction and interconnections between migratory fishers from the island of Newfoundland and the resident fishers of Labrador.

These three projects will allow HFNL to expand on its work of safeguarding coastal culture and heritage, and will bring attention to geographically-specific traditions and knowledge.

I Declare War

By Sharon King-Campbell

In my early research surrounding play and games, we released an online questionnaire asking people what their favourite game was growing up. Out of the 5 people who filled out that questionnaire in the first two days it was up, 2 of them identified a game they called “I Declare War”.

Delf Maria Hohmann also observed this game during his work in Southern Harbour in the late 1980s, although the children in that community called it “World.”

Essentially, a large circle (the world) would be drawn in the dirt and divided into equal wedges, depending on how many children were playing. Each child would claim a “country” and name it – after a nation, a famous place, or even a community nearby – and then try to defend it against attack. The attacker would throw a stick or a rock onto one of their playmates’ areas (e.g. Australia), saying “I Declare War on Australia!” and then run as far as possible from the world. Australia’s “owner” would have to either step on or pick up the thrown object before shouting “stop!” The defender would then throw the stick or rock at their attacker. If they hit them, then they had won the “war” and could claim part of their attacker’s land. If they missed, the attacker won and could claim some of the defender’s land.



Rochelle Kavanagh played the game in the 60’s with her friends in Torbay. She says: “[the player] would go back to stand on any country she owned and reaching as far as you could draw a line to capture land from a country she wanted and now claim it as her own.”

Paula Roberts played “I Declare War” when she was growing up in Clarendville, but remembers a “safe zone” in the centre of the world. When drawing the line to claim land from another player, a child could stand either on land that he or she owned or on the safe zone, which allowed players to declare war on countries that did not border on their current lands.

Players were eliminated once their lands were completely occupied, and the game continued until only one player remained and controlled the whole world. Both Kavanagh and Roberts noted that they liked the game so much, in part, because boys and girls played it together, and because girls might even have a bit of an advantage. “I was smaller, more agile, so it was easier to run, to crouch to take the land, and harder for people to hit me as I was a smaller target!” said Roberts.

“We were usually outside playing most days and you had to play games that would take a fair bit of time. This one held everyone’s interest, usually girls but the boys could easily be convinced to play because of the war element,” said Kavanagh.

Roberts might have hit the nail on the head when it came to why this game was so popular, though:

“Any game played outside in the dirt was just the very best!”

If you are interested in sharing your memories of playing in Newfoundland, I’d love to hear from you. Contact me at sharon@heritagefoundation.ca or 1-888-739-1892 ext 3.

Photo: Children playing “World” in Southern Harbour, Placentia Bay, 1987. Photo courtesy Delf Maria Hohmann.



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